Under the India-Thailand Framework Agreement for the establishment of a comprehensive Free Trade Area, an Early Harvest Scheme (EHS) under which 82 common items of export interest to both the countries have been identified and tariffs on these items have been eliminated by both countries during 2004-2006. India-Thailand bilateral trade increased from US $ 1.44 billion in 2003-04 to US $ 4.11 billion in 2007-08 at a compounded annual growth rate of 30%.

Study on impact of big retail sector on small traders by ICRIER

1712. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) conducted a study on impact of big retail on small traders in India;

(b) whether it is also a fact that ICRIER recommendations are lopsided and are in favour of larger retailers;

(c) whether it is also a fact that ICRIER said that collection of tax from organized retailers in easier;

(d) will the Government kill small retails vendors in the country just to earn revenue in the form of tax and throw the small vendors on road; and

(e) if so, the reaction of the Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The study assigned to the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) was for analysing the impact of organised retail on small retailers, employment, consumers, farmers and manufacturers, prices and overall economic growth. ICRIER's findings are based on a survey conducted across 10 cities covering unorganised retailers, consumers, intermediaries, farmers, manufacturers and modern retailers. The findings have brought out certain advantages of organised retail which, *inter-alia*, include improvement of Government revenues.

(d) and (e) Government is fully aware of the concerns of all stakeholders on the impact of organised retail on small retailers and vendors and fully recognises the need for ensuring that small retailers are not adversely affected by the growing organised retail. The findings of the ICRIER study will be considered in the light of all relevant factors taken in their entirety.

Assistance to labour intensive industries

†1713. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government is working on a plan to provide special economic assistance to country's industries which use labour intensive technics;

(b) if so, the details thereof and names of the industries chosen till now from the above category by Government;

(c) the percentage of labours finding employment therein in the counry; and

(d) type of the economic relief the Government propose to provide to these industries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (d) Government has announced incentives to stimulate industry and the economy. The package includes Rs. 20,000 crore, additional plan expenditure, an across the board reduction of 4% excise cut, *etc.* To facilitate the flow of credit to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), RBI has announced a refinance facility of Rs. 7,000/- crore for Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to support lending to MSMEs which account for approximately 7% of the labour force. Besides export incentives were announced for labour intensive industries namely textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, marine products and SME sector.

High level Task Force for boosting exports

1714. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has agreed to a proposal of exporters to set up a high level task force to bring about greater coordination and resolve numerous taxrelated problem;

(b) if so, the composition of the task force;

(c) whether the Federation of Indian Exports Organisation also proposed to declare gateway ports as sleepless ports, similar to the Shanghai Port in China, for expediting clearance of cargo round the clock;

(d) if so, the action taken by Government;

(e) whether the exporters also suggested to create a separate fund for greater market access and a single nodal agency for exports; and

(f) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Government on a continuous basis considers a number of issues concerning the exporting community, including taxation issues, at various levels as exports are dictated by the dynamics of global economics.

(c) and (d) Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) had made a suggestion in October 2005 that Gateway ports in India may be declared as "sleepless ports" where export